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SUBJECT: INTERIM TIP ASSESSMENT FOR GEORGIA

REF: SECSTATE 146300

¶1. (U) Summary: This interim assessment (reftel) covers Georgia's continuing strides against trafficking-in-persons (A-TIP) since April, 2007. Georgia aggressively investigates and prosecutes human traffickers. The country's proactive identification of TIP victims is improving, thanks to more A-TIP staff and additional training. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was consistently implemented in every TIP case identified in the reporting cycle. The National Strategy for Rehabilitation and Reintegration (SRR) of TIP victims, adopted in July 2007, is the natural extension to the NRM. It ensures follow-on service to TIP victims through the State Fund to Protect and Aid TIP victims. The Georgian government has increased its A-TIP capabilities, budget, and victim assistance programs. It has fully maintained its excellent cooperation with A-TIP NGOs and its extremely active TIP prevention campaign. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On November 7, the Prosecutor General's (PG) office reported investigations into 16 possible TIP cases since April 1. Of these, 11 cases allegedly involve internal trafficking (six involve the sale of children for adoption, three labor exploitation, and two sexual exploitation.) Seven of the 16 cases involve external trafficking, mainly for sexual exploitation in Turkey. These investigations are ongoing. Since April 1, 13 persons were being detained and charged by the PG for TIP crimes (cases were initiated in previous year/s.) In the 9 cases submitted to court, 12 judgments were handed down. The average sentence given was 13-14 years in prison. Additionally, 17 Mutual Legal Assistance Requests for TIP investigations have been processed (countries include Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine.) In May, Georgia's Parliament enacted a new law criminalizing the use of services of a TIP victim.

¶3. (U) Georgia has significantly increased its efforts to proactively identify TIP victims. Four new Special Operations Department (SOD) officers were appointed to the A-TIP unit. The Unit's 32 members are located throughout the country. They actively research and investigate possible TIP activity/information (incl. overseas employment ads.) All new police recruits undergo basic A-TIP training in the police academy. Border Police and SOD undergo advanced training. UNODC, NATO-sponsored Turkish trainers, WorldVision Georgia, ABA-CEELI and other organizations have provided specialized A-TIP training (incl. victim/witness protection) to more than 100 policemen, SOD officers, border guards, and prosecutors since April 1. In a "train the trainers" program in December, IOM will teach advanced TIP victim interviewing and identification techniques to 30 prosecutors and policemen. More and more of Georgia's peace officers are watching out for TIP, raising awareness, and relaying suspicious activity to SOD investigators. Several border checkpoints are being built, or refurbished, which will also strengthen screening for potential TIP victims.

¶4. (U) The NRM is overseen by the Interagency Coordination Council (ICC) to combat TIP. The ICC maintains two mobile groups to meet and interview alleged TIP victims anywhere in Georgia, at any time. The NRM is enacted every time a TIP crime is investigated by law enforcement or a referral is made to the State Fund to Protect and Aid TIP Victims (i.e. by a third-party.) It makes no difference if the TIP victim cooperates with a criminal investigation or not. Either the SOD or the ICC's Permanent Group can grant "statutory" TIP victim status, based on investigations or the mobile group's findings. This status provides the victim access to all State Fund services. In the 16 TIP cases since April 1, 19 victims have been granted status. Of these, 15 have chosen to cooperate in investigations. In this period, the mobile group has met nine times with 10 persons. The new SRR has normalized how the State Fund provides services for TIP victims. Now, victims can choose what assistance they need (medical, shelter, financial, legal, etc.), and it is readily provided. The State Fund works consistently with NGOs to ensure even non-statutory victims receive assistance. To expand the NRM's capabilities, Georgia spent USD 30,600 to open a second TIP victim shelter in September in Tbilisi. Georgia's shelters can now accommodate up to 20 victims, in Eastern and Western Georgia. Currently, 8 TIP victims and two (non-statutory) children are housed in the shelters. The SOD, Public Defender, and numerous NGOs know how to use the NRM.

¶5. (U) Georgia raised the State Fund's budget to USD 180,000 this year, and will raise it by 50 percent in 2008. The ICC maintains a TIP victim hotline throughout the country and distributes A-TIP pamphlets with passports and at border crossings. High school curricula include TIP awareness training. In conjunction with NGOs, the ICC kicked off a new

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PSA campaign and has sponsored numerous A-TIP TV and radio programs. They have conducted multiple public awareness events, including two at local universities. The ICC continues to work together with numerous other NGOs and agencies, including Georgian Young Lawyers Association, IOM, IOL, OSCE, WorldVision, and the Anti-Violence Network.  
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